

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 06153 041711Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----041731Z 129588 /46

O R 041635Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7003
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION GERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T MOSCOW 6153

EXDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, FR,GW, UR, US, UK, WB
SUBJECT: BERLIN: THE SOVIET THREAT TO ALLIED FLAG TOURS

REF: (A) BONN 7386, (B) BONN 7473, (C) STATE 86258

SUMMARY: THE SOVIET DEMARCHE ON THE ALLIED FLAG TOURS IS
A TEST OF ALLIED DETERMINATION IN AN AREA DIRECTLY AFFECTING
THE EXERCISE OF ALLIED RIGHTS IN BERLIN. HENCE, THE
SOVIETS ARE UNLIKELY TO BREAK OFF THE CHALLENGE UNLESS THEY
ARE CONVINCED THAT IT WILL LEAD TO A CONFRONTATION. WE
RECOMMEND THAT THE ALLIES MEET ANY FURTHER SOVIET MOVES TO
RESTRICT OR END ALLIED FLAG TOURS WITH A SERIES OF GRADUATED
RESPONSES AIMED AT SOVIET MOVEMENT AND PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE MOTIVES FOR SOVIET AND GDR MOVES IN RECENT

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MONTHS IN BERLIN ARE COMPLEX AND PROBABLY INCLUDE A
MIX OF THOSE LISTED IN SECTION B OF REF A. HOWEVER,
WE ARE CONVINCED THAT WHATEVER THE MOTIVIES FOR THE
ENSEMBLE OF MOVES, THE SOVIETS ARE CERTAINLY AWARE
THAT THEY HAVE ENTERED A NEW AND MORE SERIOUS AREA
BY DEMANDING A STOP TO ALLIED FLAG TOURS IN EAST
BERLIN. INDEED, THE CHANGE IN THE PROCEDURE SUGGESTS

THAT THEY REALIZE THE POTENTIAL DANGER. THE PREVIOUS STEPS TAKEN WITH RESPECT TO EAST BERLIN WERE TAKEN WITHOUT ANY ADVANCE NOTICE; THE WESTERN POWERS WERE FACED WITH A SERIES OF FAITS ACCOMPLIS WHICH DID NOT INTERFERE DIRECTLY WITH THE EXERCISE OF ANY OF THEIR RIGHTS. IN THE CASE OF THE FLAG TOURS, HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS ARE, IN EFFECT, RAISING THE ISSUE IN ADVANCE OF ANY ACTION, ALBEIT THEIR DEMARCHES DO RESERVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE ACTION SHOULD WE REFUSE TO STOP THE TOURS.

2. WE CONTINUE TO THINK THAT THE SOVIETS PROBABLY DO NOT WISH TO SEE A MAJOR CONFRONTATION IN BERLIN SINCE THIS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY AFFECT DETENTE, INCLUDING THE PLANNED BREZHNEV TRIPS TO FRANCE AND THE FRG. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET APPROACHES ON FLAG TOURS WERE MADE SIMPLY FOR THE RECORD (REF A, SECTION D). RATHER WE SEE THIS STEP AS A CHALLENGE AND A TEST OF ALLIED DETERMINATION AND WILL ON A MATTE WHICH DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE EXERCISE OF ALLIED RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

3. SINCE THE SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN NO ACTION YET, WE BELIEVE THAT THE MAY 3 REJECTION BY THE ALLIES OF THE DEMAND STANDS SOME CHANCE OF GAINING TIME. BUT, HAVING MADE THE DEMARCHE, THE SOVIETS ARE UNLIKELY TO DESIST UNTIL THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT ATTEMPTS TO END FLAG TOURS WILL IN FACT RESULT IN A MAJOR CONFRONTATION. THE TWO MOST LIKELY COURSES OPEN TO THE SOVIETS ARE
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TO INTERFERE WITH ALLIED FLAG TOURS IN EAST BERLIN OR TO FOLLOW UP THE LATEST DEMARCHE WITH A STRONGER ONE GIVING SOME TIME LIMIT FOR ENDING THE WESTERN TOURS OR THREATENING SPECIFIC ACTION.

4. SHOULD THE SOVIETS TAKE DIRECT ACTION AGAINST FLAG TOURS, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THE ALLIES BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE IMMEDIATE AND SPECIFIC RETALIATORY ACTIONS. ANY INTERFERENCE IN ALLIED TOURS IN EAST BERLIN SHOULD BE COUNTERED WITH CORRESPONDING INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET MOVEMENT IN WEST BERLIN. ANY ADDITIONAL SOVIET DEMARCH WHICH THREATENS TO CARRY THE SOVIET DEMAND FURTHER SHOULD BE MET WITH A STRONGLY-WORDED RESPONSE WHICH STATES THAT WE WOULD BE COMPELLED TO TAKE RETALIATORY MEASURES AND THAT THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD LIE ON THE SOVIET SIDE.

5. THE MEASURES WHICH WE HAVE IN MIND WOULD BE A

CAREFULLY GRADUATED SERIES OF HARRASSMENTS, LIMITATIONS AND/OR STOPPAGES OF SOVIET MOVEMENTS IN WEST BERLIN RESPONDING IN EACH CASE TO A SIMILAR SOVIET MOVE. THE SOVIET MOVEMENT IN THE WESTERN SECTORS OF BERLIN WHICH APPEAR TO US TO BE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR RETALIATORY ACTION ARE (A) SOVIET TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE SOVIET WAR MEMORIAL; (B) SOVIET TRANSIT OF WEST BERLIN ENROUTE TO AND FROM POTSDAM, AND (C) SOVIET TRAVEL TO AND FROM SPANDAU. STEPS AGAINST ALL THREE ALLIED TOURS IN EAST BERLIN WOULD BE MET BY CORRESPONDING MEASURES IN THESE THREE SOVIET MOVEMENTS.

6. ADDITIONALLY, SINCE THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN WEST BERLIN IS ALSO INSURED BY THE PRESENCE IN THE WSB OF THE SOVIET CONSULATE GENERAL, WE BELIEVE THAT THE ALLIES SHOULD, IN THE EVENT OF A TOTAL STOPPAGE OF THE
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FLAG TOURS, CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING STEPS AGAINST THE SOVIET CONSULATE GENERAL, SUCH AS LIMITING THE NUMBERS OF SOVIETS AT THE CONSULATE OR CLOSING THE FACILITY COMPLETELY. WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THAT ANY MEASURES BE TAKEN AGAINST SOVIET PARTICIPATION AT THE BERLIN AIR CONTROL CENTER. EMBASSY BONN AND U.S. MISSION BERLIN ARE BEST ABLE TO RECOMMEND THE PRECISE MODULATION OF THESE RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC SOVIET ACTIONS.

7. IN SUM, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT ANY SIGN THAT THE ALLIES ARE NOT FULLY AND JOINTLY COMMITTED TO DEFENDING THE FLAG TOURS WILL ONLY INCREASE SOVIET DETERMINATION AND PRESSURES TO END THEM. THEREFORE, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT, WHILE SIGNALLING OUR DESIRE TO HEAD OFF A CONFRONTATION, THE ALLIES PREPARE TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO SOVIET THREATS AND ACTIONS BY FORCEFULLY CONVEYING OUR FIRM RESOLVE TO PROTECT OUR INTERESTS, IF NECESSARY BY RETALIATORY MEASURES WHICH WOULD BE PAINFUL TO MOSCOW.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMARCHE, STATUS OF BERLIN, BERLIN QUADRIPARTITE MATTERS, MILITARY VEHICLES, BORDER CONTROLS, THREATS, REPRISALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW06153
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770156-0750
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770596/aaaadenc.tel
Line Count: 159
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 295a8c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 BONN 7386, 77 BONN 7473, 77 STATE 86258
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2645288
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BERLIN: THE SOVIET THREAT TO ALLIED FLAG TOURS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, FR, GE, UR, US, UK, WB
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/295a8c9a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009